



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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STATEMENT OF FCC CHAIRMAN MICHAEL K. POWELL ON WIRELESS HEARING AID COMPATIBILITY PROGRESS

Three important events this week will advance the Commission's goal of implementing hearing aid compatibility with wireless phones: (1) a technical standards workshop; (2) an intergovernmental coordination session and (3) a new industry technical incubator program.

Taken together, these three initiatives will significantly advance the Commission's commitment to ensuring that all Americans – whether or not they use hearing aids – have an opportunity to enjoy the benefits of wireless communications. Our commitment is most recently illustrated by the Commission's decision to lift the fifteen year old exemption on hearing aid compatibility for wireless phones. Our success in implementing hearing aid compatibility will depend on the cooperative efforts of wireless service providers, wireless phone manufacturers, hearing aid manufacturers, consumer representatives, federal agencies, and other stakeholders. I am pleased with the various efforts underway this week focusing on the implementation of the Commission's new rules requiring certain digital wireless phones to be capable of effective use with hearing aids.

Yesterday, September 3, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Accredited Standards Committee C63 sponsored a workshop to give participants an in-depth understanding of the requirements of the ANSI C63.19 technical standard governing wireless hearing aid compatibility, as well as the test methods used in evaluating a product's compliance. The FCC's rules on wireless hearing aid compatibility incorporate certain performance levels set forth in this ANSI standard.

Today, Thursday, September 4, the Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR) and its Technology Subcommittee is sponsoring a workshop to promote coordination and cooperation among Federal departments and agencies on hearing aid compatibility. This event brings together prominent investigators, federal agencies including the Food and Drug Administration and the FCC, consumers, and industry representatives.

Finally, the first meeting of the Hearing Aid Compatibility Incubator of the Alliance for Telecommunications Solutions will take place on Friday. This event will bring together representatives of the wireless and hearing aid industries to share information and discuss technical issues associated with implementing changes to digital wireless phones in accordance with the Commission's new wireless hearing aid compatibility rules.

I support the efforts of these organizations and the participants as they work to implement the Commission's wireless hearing aid compatibility requirements. This work is integral to preserving access to wireless telecommunications to individuals with hearing disabilities – a goal that will benefit us all.

-FCC-

For Further Details Regarding the Hearing Aid Compatibility Events This Week:

ANSI Accredited Standards Committee Workshop:

<http://c63.ieee.org/C63-19workshop-030903.html>

ICDR:

<http://www.icdr.us>

Hearing Aid Compatibility Incubator of the Alliance for Telecommunications Solutions Meeting:

<http://www.atis.org/atis/hac/meetingdocs.htm>